

GOVERNMENT SUIT AGAINST ATLANTIC STEAMSHIP LINES.

FILED UNDER ANTI-TRUST ACT AGAINST ALLEGED CONSPIRACY TO CONTROL STEERAGE BUSINESS.

Almost All Big Trans-Atlantic Companies Defendants—Alleged Steerage Pool Formed in London in 1908—Known as Atlantic Conference—Government Declares it Forced Many Independents Out of Business or Into Its Ranks—Would Enjoin Clearances at U. S. Ports.

By direction of Attorney-General Wickersham, District Attorney Wise has commenced suit in the Circuit Court against the various European steamship companies on charges of conspiracy and of being engaged in an unlawful combination to restrain a part of the trade and commerce of the United States with foreign nations, and to monopolize this trade by destroying all competition between themselves and other transportation companies in the carrying of third class passengers.

The lines mentioned are the Allen Line, International Mercantile Marine Co., International Navigation Co., Anchor Line, Canadian Pacific Steamship Co., Cunard Line, British & North American Steam Navigation Co., Hamburg-American Line, Holland America Line, Red Star Line, White Star Line, Russian East Asiatic Steamship Co. and the officers of these companies.

The complaint alleges that each of these steamship companies has for some years been engaged in carrying third-class passengers and selling tickets at a fixed price; that on Feb. 5, 1908, at London, these companies entered into a contract and conspiracy by which they charged a uniform rate of passage fare and that each of the contracting parties should carry only a certain number of third-class passengers; that each of the contracting parties should pay a penalty of £4 sterling for each passenger carried in excess of its allotted number.

It is alleged that the average number of third-class passengers each year during the continuance of this contract has been 1,200,000 passengers and that the average number of third-class passengers returning to Europe during the same time has been about 300,000.

The Government sues to abolish this alleged combination and leave the carrying of steerage passengers from Europe to this country and vice versa open to competition. The Government also seeks to impose a penalty upon each of the offending lines for the alleged conspiracy and restraint of trade.

In the bill of complaint it is set forth that "under the terms of this contract these lines agreed to divide and share in the entire steerage traffic forwarded by all of them between all European ports and the United States and Canada, with the exception of traffic consisting of Italian and Oriental (that is passengers to and from Greece, Africa and Asia), steerage passengers forwarded by direct steamships through the Straits of Gibraltar as follows:

West bound—Allen line, 62 per cent.; Anchor line, 3.40 per cent.; Cunard line, 13.75 per cent.; Hamburg-American, 19.61 per cent.; Holland America, 6.63 per cent.; North German Lloyd, 26.58 per cent.; Red Star line, 9.71 per cent.; White Star line, 8.60 per cent.; American line, 6.68 per cent.; Dominion line, 4.47 per cent.

East bound—Allen line, 4.95 per cent.; Anchor line, 3.93 per cent.; Cunard line, 12.77 per cent.; Fiume-Trieste service, 2.85 per cent.; Hamburg-American, 12.35 per cent.; Holland America, 6.10 per cent.; North German Lloyd, 18.79 per cent.; Red Star Line, 8.56 per cent.; White Star, 15.49 per cent.; American, 8.72 per cent.; Dominion, 1.50 per cent.; Canadian Pacific 4.49 per cent.

Government Suit Against Atlantic Steamship Lines: Almost All Big Trans-Atlantic Companies Defendants

